

COLLECTIVIZATION IN EAST GERMANY

I. During past few months East German regime has been pursuing all-out agricultural collectivization campaign the likes of which have not been seen in East Germany since 1952.

A. GDR 25X1
 has decided to complete collectivization during 1960.

1. Determination of top party leadership apparently firm, although ruthless methods used against farmers reportedly have caused sharp differences in party and have drawn public condemnation by church leaders.
 - a. Earlier some Evangelical (Protestant) church leaders had been persuaded to express support for regime's objective of increasing production by merging numerous small farm holdings into larger units.

B. Percentage of agricultural lands collectivized has been raised from 50 to over 80 percent in past three months.

1. Increase in all of 1959 was only 7 percent.

C. Since 1 January, collectivization has been announced as now completed in eight of the country's 14 districts.

II. Most of the remarkably rapid collectivization thus far this year has been in north and north-central parts of country.

A. In these areas, the peasants for the most part live in villages which are surrounded by their plots--thus constituting units more easily collectivized.

B. In contrast, most farmers in southern districts of the country live on their farms instead of in central villages, and hence collectivization there will be more difficult.

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C. Predominantly Catholic sections in Thuringia can also be

expected to be more firm in resistance.

III. Resistance to collectivization has been strong and will probably continue, but is not expected to lead to serious disorders or demonstrations.

A. Opposition has been strong enough to require what even Ulbricht has publicly conceded were "excesses" in the regime's application of pressure on landowners.

1. Known "excesses" include threats of imprisonment and actual jailing of reluctant farmers; denial of equipment, feed, and fertilizer to farmers who refuse to join collectives; compelling farmers coerced into collectives to sign statements that they joined voluntarily.

2. [REDACTED] there is firm evidence of numerous suicides and nervous breakdowns among East German farmers as a result of the collectivization drive.

B. Sabotage and arson, of which there have been many cases in past several months, will probably continue, perhaps on increased scale.

C. In addition, the refugee flow into Berlin and East Germany, which has gone up in past few weeks (now running about 2,200 a week), will probably increase further, unless expected security measures effectively seal escape routes.

IV. Some evidence, however, that regime may slow down collectivization temporarily now that planting season has started and wait until after the fall harvest to complete the job.

A. 1959 was poor crop year and regime may seek to reduce turmoil in countryside during current crop season.

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